

Chapter 1

Humility

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.

Philippians 2:3



Seeing God

We'd all like to be humble.
But what if nobody notices?

John Ortberg, pastor, author

WELCOME TO MY HOME!

Welcome to my home! Won't you join me in my living room, so we can begin to talk about the modernizing makeover you've chosen to undergo? I'm definitely excited for you. I've got a comfy, oversized chair you may like—I think it's called a *chair-and-a-half*. Kick off your shoes and curl up with the fuzzy throw. Rearrange the marshmallow-soft pillows as needed. I've turned on the small, tabletop waterfall to create some soft background sounds for you, and I'll get our snacks out of the fridge momentarily—but first, let's begin this forty-day adventure together in prayer:

Dear Sweet Lord,

No makeover is ever easy, whether it's our appearance, home interior, curbside appeal, or our character. As we begin today, we don't need a curling iron or a paint roller or a garden hoe as a tool; we only need you and the wisdom of your Word. We know that this character remodel won't happen while we stand by idle and passive; it will only happen if we willingly engage in the process. Lead us boldly as we explore humility. Impress your humility on our hearts today. Help us to see how this characteristic is foundational to developing all the other character traits and to completing the incredible plan you intend for our lives. Sit with us now as we begin this transformation of our souls, this character makeover.

Amen.

Shall we dive into the life-changing concept of humility, which will truly help us to see with the eyes of God?

KATIE: HAVING BEEN DULY HUMBLLED

I remember my cocky attitude many years ago when I was a director of public relations for a very profitable, publicly held company. It was my heyday of wearing expensive clothes and costly jewelry, and being treated well by my employer—financially and emotionally. I was in the inner circle of those few who got invited to the owner’s home for Christmas parties. I had arrived! I think what I loved most about that job was that my opinion counted; I had a voice. The problem was that I wasn’t embarrassed to brag about my good fortune. Then, in the blink of an eye, a corporate reorganization occurred as the company was being positioned for sale, and I was “on the streets” looking for a job with many other coworkers.

It was about that time that someone called me *vapor-ware*. It was one person’s unique way of saying that I only had vapor inside the personal Tupperware® of my life, that I had nothing to offer. Zip. Zilch. Nada. My heart sank. I was humiliated! I knew that statement was not true, but it hurt me deeply to realize that someone thought that poorly of me. What I learned that day was that cruel humiliation is not God’s way, only man’s way. What I decided to do about the unkind remark was life-changing. I went on a personal quest to “get real” and fill my plastic life with Christlike substance. I’d say that God used the layoff from a pride-producing job, as well as the humiliating comment, to get my attention and cause me to want to work on building more of him, more humility into my life. For that, I will be eternally grateful.

CLASSIC CASES OF HUMILITY

Humility is a compelling, attractive quality in a person. Truly humble people are likeable, even irresistible. When I think about some of the well-known stories I grew up with, I realize that the thing that makes them so captivating is that they feature humble, others-centered people. In *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, we root for poor little Charlie Bucket, the only kind child on the chocolate factory tour. Cinderella is a criticized yet servant-hearted girl who wins our hearts on her way to winning the prince. *To Kill a Mockingbird* draws us to a white attorney in the deep South named Atticus Finch, a truly humble man, who greatly respects the black man he’s defending. George Bailey is so humble it takes an angel to get him to believe that he is significant to people in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. And *Chariots of Fire* is the true story of Eric Liddell, a missionary-turned-Olympic athlete who earns our respect by honoring God above his potential medals. It’s these unlikely

heroes, the humble, unself-conscious people, who endear themselves to us, both in fiction and in life.

HUMILITY IS THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

So, how does one go about becoming humble? Does it require coming from humble circumstances, like Charlie Bucket? Or being mortified, like Cinderella? Should we endure slander for helping the accused, like Atticus Finch? Or be self-deprecating, like George Bailey? Does it mean to sacrifice our own glory, as did Eric Liddell? In actuality, none of these approaches guarantees humility. They could just as easily produce anger, self-righteousness, vengeance, pride, and/or depression.

The only sure path to humility is through gaining the right perspective. Humility is a natural result of having an accurate view of who God is and having the right perspective of who you are in relation to him. Truly humble people compare themselves not with other people, but only with Christ. They realize their sinfulness and understand their limitations.

On the other hand, they also recognize their gifts and strengths and are willing to use them as Christ directs. A truly humble person will serve God in any capacity, even if she doesn't feel particularly gifted in that area. What about the person who dutifully shows up every week to sharpen the pew pencils? Is that person truly gifted in pencil sharpening? No, she knows that the job needs to be done and doesn't feel that she is above that task or think she should conserve her energy for something more attuned to her talents. How often, when a church ministry is seeking volunteers, do we hear, "That's not my area of giftedness"? Can that be just another way of saying, "I can get more kudos doing something I'm really good at"?

We may be thinking that humility is something that it's not. We may assume that humility is discovering our inner doormat, but as my personal example illustrates, humility is not the same as humiliation. Humiliation is self-mortification that evokes the sense of being debased, unworthy, shamed. It screams at us that we have done something wrong and are therefore worthless! Frankly, I want to be clear that God loves us too much to ever want us to feel that way; his desire is not to shame us or humiliate us. That is the demeaning work of the Devil. The Bible tells us that God honors us; he chooses us; he pursues us; he sacrifices for us; he woos us; he protects us; and he provides for us; but never once does it say that he humiliates us. Granted, he does discipline us to get our eyes off ourselves and onto him, but discipline is not the same as humiliation.

Humility can coexist with self-worth, esteem, and personal value. Right thinking about yourself in relationship to God is realistic thinking—a full-orbed picture of your strengths and weaknesses, your actual appearance, genuine talents, negative habits, and real worth. Thinking that you’re more wonderful than you really are is pride, and thinking that you’re more wretched than you really are is false humility, which is another form of pride because it’s still self-focused.

Make no mistake about it: We are God’s chosen ones, his prized possessions. Isaiah 62:4 (MSG) tells us:

*No more will anyone call you Rejected,
and your country will no more be called Ruined.
You’ll be called Hephzibah (My Delight).*

Bottom line, we need to get this false humility versus godly humility versus pride thing straight in our minds by understanding that our value rests in God, not in ourselves. To picture this on a continuum, think of humility as being at the middle of a scale:



False humility is at the extreme left side of the scale—thinking everyone else is better than you. At the extreme right end of the scale is boastful, prideful thinking. Humility is balanced in the middle, with a right view of who you are and who you’re not, and who God is and that you just ain’t him! When your eyes are on yourself and how great thou art, that equals pride. When your eyes are on God, you can’t help but be humble.

HUMILITY IS THE FOUNDATION

Of all the character qualities we’re going to work on together, humility is not only the most endearing quality, it is also the foundational character quality to all the others. You can’t build genuine character qualities without having humility as a component of all of them. Let me put it this way. It would be natural for me, with my coaching bent, to use the “Ten Easy Steps to Character,” or “Twenty Ways to Be Your Best,” or “Eight Character Qualities of Winners” approach to character development, and thus reduce the process to a shallow formula. The problem with shallow formulas is that once you follow the blueprint, you could end up thinking you had *achieved*

character, when in actuality you would have just gone through an exercise in pridefulness. It's the potentially dangerous "power of positive thinking" mentality that says, "If I believe, then I can achieve." This rules out dependence upon God and steals any glory from him in the process.

A humble woman gets her strength for the journey from God, then gives the credit to him when something good happens. Humility must be our starting place for the narrow passage to deeper character. Without it, we'll all turn into highly principled overachievers who are no closer to true Christlikeness than when we started. And that's surely not where we want to end up!

HUMILITY IS SELF-CONFIDENCE

Speaking of Christlikeness, it's fascinating to discover how Jesus described his own character. There is only one recorded instance of him talking about himself in this way, and in that discussion he used only two words to describe himself. The two words may surprise you. They're not "strong and mighty," or "all-knowing and wise," or "perfect and God-man." His self-description is: *I am gentle and humble in heart* (Matthew 11:29b). It was later, at the end of his life, that Jesus gave his disciples a graphic illustration of his gentle and humble character when he washed their feet.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

John 13:3–5

This story starts not with what Jesus did, but with what he knew. Jesus knew his strengths, yet he did not use them to dominate or manipulate; his strength was under God's control—which is the biblical definition of gentleness. And he was humble. But notice that humility doesn't mean downplaying who you are by saying things like, "Oh, I'm really not that talented," or "I just threw something together—it's nothing at all." Jesus fully knew and honestly acknowledged his true nature, his strengths, his full identity, and his brilliant future. Yet, see what happens next? Unannounced, he interrupted his meal, quietly made his preparations, and commenced humbly serving others. Out of his strong self-image, he humbly served.

Have you ever assumed that strong self-image and humility are contradictory concepts? Jesus does not. His humble act of service was born out of a sure sense of all that was good and true about himself. The lesson here is that it takes a strong self-image to perform truly humble acts of service. G. K. Chesterton, an influential English writer of the early twentieth century, said, “It is always the secure who are humble.”

SHOULD YOU PRAY FOR HUMILITY?

Asking God for humility is a scary thing. All I can say is this: Be careful what you ask for! You may wonder: Will God answer my prayers for humility by embarrassing me? Debasing me? Well, I certainly thought the answer was yes, many years ago, when I was a house cleaner for wealthy families. One day, after I had cleaned a palatial master bathroom for an hour, I found myself on my hands and knees downstairs, scrubbing a marble floor that seemed to stretch for miles from the front door through the formal living room and family room on into the kitchen and out to the back slider door. All of a sudden, I looked up to heaven, shook my fist at God, and cried out in anger, “This is how you answer my heartfelt and constant prayer for humility? How dare you treat me this way!” I was furious at God. I had been praying that he would break me of all pride, but scrubbing toilets and floors week after week was too much! Notice that even my enraged reaction to God was evidence of a heart not humbled. (By the way, this happened in 1989, immediately prior to getting the cushy public relations job—and we’ve already exposed my pride there!)

Now, the big question: Had God caused me to be a housecleaner, so he could answer my prayer for humility? No, being an overspending, single mom in graduate school had caused me to be a housecleaner. I had orchestrated part of my circumstances myself. But, even when I *looked up* at him in anger, he knew the desire to be humble was on my heart. I didn’t have to clean toilets to get humble—I had to focus on God’s power and humility would follow. I must admit that my process was a long, convoluted one (as you may already suspect), but I am grateful that he was patient with me. Final warning: Be careful what you pray for!

Journal

If humility is having the right perspective about who God is and who I am in relation to him, let's start by getting that perspective firm in our minds. This concept is powerfully described in Psalm 103. Read each portion of the psalm, then summarize your answers to the three questions:

Psalm 103:1–5

Who is God? _____

Who am I in relation to him? _____

How can this understanding help me become humble? _____

Psalm 103:6–10

Who is God? _____

Who am I in relation to him? _____

How can this understanding help me become humble? _____

Psalm 103:11–14

Who is God? _____

Who am I in relation to him? _____

How can this understanding help me become humble? _____

Psalm 103:15–18

Who is God? _____

Who am I in relation to him? _____

How can this understanding help me become humble? _____

Psalm 103:19–22

Who is God? _____

Who am I in relation to him? _____

How can this understanding help me become humble? _____

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

Thank you that you don't cause our humiliation, but that you redeem it for good in our lives. That's a relief. I want to be humble, but it's daunting to pray for humility, imagining what circumstance you might use so that I'll learn it! But I trust you, Lord, and I submit myself to you to teach me humility however you choose. Reassure me about my identity in you so that I can be secure enough to be humble. Get my eyes firmly locked on you so that I start to lose my self-focus. Show me the needs of those around me; then help me to do something about what you show me. And as I stop thinking about myself and start focusing on you and others, I look forward to being seen by you as one of your humble servants.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Pride: Exposing Your Inner Buzz Lightyear

Pride is the root of every sin and evil.

Andrew Murray, 1828–1917, Dutch Reformed minister and author

A VIRTUAL MESSAGE



NOTE: It's Day 2, so you have the option of listening to today's message by downloading it from my website, www.LifePurposeCoachingCenters.com/CM, or reading the message text below. Enjoy the virtual coaching and don't forget to open in prayer!

THE FLIP SIDE OF PRIDE

The 1995 animated movie *Toy Story* tells the tale of the rivalry between Woody, the honest-Abe cowboy toy, and Buzz Lightyear, the prideful, fancy spaceman toy. The problem with Buzz is that he is convinced he is a real space ranger who must single-handedly save the galaxy from destruction. He is so self-absorbed he doesn't realize he is a mere toy. Woody feels compelled to point out Buzz's blind spot at every opportunity. For example, when Buzz sets his laser from stun to kill, Woody retorts, "Oh, great. If anyone attacks, we can blink 'em to death." When Buzz deploys his terillium-carbonic alloy wings, Woody sneers, "That wasn't flying! That was falling with style!"

Buzz was obsessed with himself—his powers, his weapons, his important mission, his pivotal role in saving the world. Because of his pride, he lost touch with the reality that his powers came from batteries; his abilities came from kids who moved his arms or threw him in the air; and his mission was all in his head. That's what pride does. It makes us delusional. We get so focused on our own inflated capabilities, our possessions, our appearance, our importance, and our indispensability that we become oblivious to

the reality that everything we are is from God and that we can do nothing without him.

In *Toy Story*, Buzz has an accident while arguing about his ability to fly, necessitating his rescue by Woody. It goes to prove that well-known verse, “Pride precedes a disaster, and an arrogant attitude precedes a fall” (Proverbs 16:18 GWT).

THE MANY FACES OF PRIDE

Pride at its essence is a problem of being me-centered. There is a whole range of pride-driven sins, which are most commonly seen in the ways we *mis-value* ourselves and others—by exalting ourselves, belittling ourselves, attacking others, or ignoring others. Pride sets us up against God and attempts to seize his lordship for ourselves.

Exalting myself: “It’s all about me.”

Exalting pride occurs when we *overvalue* ourselves by trying to build ourselves up. Let’s consider some of the behaviors women might use to exalt themselves:

- Constantly showing off the accomplishments of their children.
- Exaggerating, because the simple truth doesn’t get enough reaction.
- Serving to be noticed. (This was a particular problem of mine for a season. Once when I was on a missions trip to Africa, my pride reared its ugly head. As we washed the street children, I was having a really bad hair day, so . . . I simply decided to avoid the photographer who was snapping candid shots of all the activities. Proudful? Yes, but here’s where the more devious side of pride kicked in: All of a sudden, I felt really angry that I wouldn’t be in any of the photos that would circulate back home!)
- Feeling entitled to star treatment, especially during times of sacrificial work.
- Maneuvering for a preferred position in their extended family, community, or workplace.

“You’re hopeless, you Pharisees! Frauds! You love sitting at the head table at church dinners, love preening yourselves in the radiance of public flattery.”

Luke 11:43 MSG

Ouch. Jesus sure knows how to say it like it is! When we exalt ourselves, we aren't exalting God. In fact, exalting ourselves amounts to seizing the credit that belongs to God ... claiming it as if we achieved our position through our own merit.

Belittling myself: "Woe is me."

Worthlessness is the most deceptive form of pride. This type of pride masquerades as humility, but it's really a reverse method of attracting attention. Women who belittle themselves are masters at *undervaluing* their worth. Think of some methods you have seen women use to tear themselves down, in hopes that someone will notice and build them back up. How about these?

- Women who overwork and let others take advantage of them.
- Women who have a difficult time accepting help, gifts, or compliments because they don't feel worthy, or who feel like it's shameful or awkward to need help.
- Perfectionists who secretly try to prove they are worthy by absolutely controlling some area of their lives.
- Women who are down on themselves and constantly pointing out their shortcomings, failures, or areas where someone else is better.

"And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, who try to look pale and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I assure you, that is the only reward they will ever get."

Matthew 6:16 NLT

Attacking others: "You're not as good as me."

Pride that attacks others is a judgmental spirit, one which *devalues* others by tearing them down. You'll notice this in women who are critical, irritable, intolerant, argumentative, and self-righteous. Read this unusual adaptation of the well-known passage about the speck in your neighbor's eye and the log in your own for a fresh perspective on this type of pride:

"Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. ²That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. ³It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. ⁴Do you have the nerve to say, "Let me wash your face for you," when your own face is distorted by contempt? ⁵It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-

than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor.”

Matthew 7:1–5 MSG

Attacking others and trying to change them actually amounts to commandeering the place of the Holy Spirit in people’s lives.

Ignoring others: “You’re not the boss of me.”

When my daughter was young, she constantly told her older brother: “You can’t make me. You’re not the boss of me!” This type of ignoring others obviously *undervalues* their input. Women who are too proud to receive input deal with some of these issues:

- Not being teachable. The attitude of “I already have my act together” closes women to the efforts of others to speak into their lives.
- Remaining stuck in bad patterns. Some women see their past and their personality as a trap in which they’re stuck, instead of realizing they can choose either to stay the same or change their behavior. For some, the statement “You need to accept me the way I am” is a smoke screen they use to avoid changing bad habits.
- Never admitting fault. This is the “hard of hearing” woman, who doesn’t seem to perceive or internalize any words of correction, advice, rebuke, instruction, or warning.

Israel’s pride will cause their defeat; they will not turn back to the LORD their God or look to him for help in all this.

Hosea 7:10 NCV

Ignoring others is a refusal to be influenced by those the Holy Spirit is trying to use to speak into your life. It is saying to God: I’m fine just the way I am.

BETTE’S STORY OF BROKENNESS

You may have heard that brokenness is a stepping-stone to humility. But . . . it might first lead to a step in the opposite direction! My friend Bette’s brokenness caused years of compensating for her shame, which actually turned into pride. As a very young child, Bette’s friendships were marred by several instances of sexual abuse that she kept secret. One instance, in particular, was manipulated by a female babysitter, a teen, who convincingly made the violation a “condition of true and lasting friendship”—and friendship was

what Bette craved. By age nine she was eating to gain weight to make herself ugly in order to keep any more predators away. In her teens, she compensated for her shame and poor self-esteem by becoming an overachiever. Yet when she was eighteen, she overheard a coworker say that she would never amount to anything, a cutting remark that Bette spent the next thirty years trying to prove wrong.

Bette sought self-worth by taking charge. She worked her way up in the escrow industry, angling for better titles and bigger salaries by hiding her inadequacies behind exaggeration and self-promotion. She covered her relational insecurity by buying friends gifts for every occasion—from the most prestigious stores—with money she didn't have. She hid her fear that she wouldn't measure up by trying to be the perfect mom, the perfect friend, the perfect church member.

A turning point came in 2001. In Bette's words, "One day, alone at home, while listening to a song, I discovered that I was burdened with shame. I heard the word 'shame' and suddenly the tears were gushing. No longer did I want to live ashamed of the person God created me to be!"

In 2003, in obedience to the unmistakable leading of God, Bette and her family left California and moved to their family homestead in Texas. She started letting go of her compensation methods, one after the other, and in the process she discovered a life of simplicity and honesty without those prideful, shameful masks. Bette no longer had the prestige of a job as vice president and general manager. She couldn't afford a gift-buying frenzy at Christmas, but after the initial embarrassment of not meeting people's perceived expectations, she felt a freeing sense of a return to true friendship based on love, not gifts.

When her new pastor learned about her past experience as head of women's ministries, he invited her to fill that role in their church. But because she couldn't get confirmation from God, she chose not to grab for the approval and acceptance of that "easy fix." Instead, she remained in the background, doing temporary projects when asked and waiting for the ministry the Lord wanted her to have. With her freed-up time, she took seriously the exhortation of her aunt who told her, "You're the spiritual influence in your extended family," and she made her family the focus of her ministry energy.

Bette says, "I have discovered that 'doing church' isn't always just walking through a set of doors on Sunday. It is often simply walking through a set of doors to give a hug to family members or helping them meet a deadline for a project they may be working on at the time. I now have a fresh perspective on my life."

Pride Test – But Only for the Strong of Heart!

This test is a rigorous self-examination to detect pride in your life. Circle the number corresponding to how frequently you think you have exhibited each type of prideful attitude within the last several weeks. Warning: Take only if you are having a good day!

Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Frequently

Exalting Myself

- 1 2 3 4 Asserting my rights: I am concerned about getting what I deserve.
- 1 2 3 4 Bragging: I boast about successes (mine or my kids') without crediting God.
- 1 2 3 4 Entitlement: I deserve special treatment because of my condition or position.
- 1 2 3 4 Exaggerating: I embellish the truth to get attention.
- 1 2 3 4 Name dropping: Knowing important people makes me feel important.
- 1 2 3 4 Self-centeredness: I am blind to the needs of others. "It's all about me."
- 1 2 3 4 Showing off: I call attention to my possessions, abilities, or sacrifices.
- 1 2 3 4 Vain: I am obsessed with the areas where I am better than others.

Belittling Myself

- 1 2 3 4 False humility: I point out my shortcomings, looking for reassurance.
- 1 2 3 4 Overly independent: I can't receive help or gifts. That would be awkward or shameful!
- 1 2 3 4 Overworking: I work to exhaustion; it makes me feel worthy.
- 1 2 3 4 Overserving: I serve beyond the call of duty, looking for affirmation.
- 1 2 3 4 Perfectionism: I try to be perfect; it makes me feel acceptable.
- 1 2 3 4 Woe is me: I often have a catastrophe to lament, looking for pity.
- 1 2 3 4 Works: I have to do more to deserve God's approval.
- 1 2 3 4 Worthlessness: I rely on the reassurance of others to bolster my self-esteem.

(cont.)

Never
Rarely
Sometimes
Frequently

Attacking Others

- 1 2 3 4 Argumentative: I choose to find what I disagree with and engage in a quarrel.
- 1 2 3 4 Controlling: I manage the actions of others to make sure they do things my way.
- 1 2 3 4 Critical spirit: I look for ways others don't meet my standards and point them out.
- 1 2 3 4 Intolerance: I won't accommodate opinions different than my own.
- 1 2 3 4 Irritability: I get annoyed easily and lash out at those who bother me.
- 1 2 3 4 Judgmentalism: I assume the worst or exhibit a condemnatory attitude.
- 1 2 3 4 Put-downs: I intentionally belittle others with cutting or snubbing remarks.
- 1 2 3 4 Self-righteousness: I justify poor treatment of others by my holiness.

Ignoring Others

- 1 2 3 4 Pouting: If I don't get my way, I clam up.
- 1 2 3 4 Ignoring correction: I'm never wrong (plus I'm hard of hearing!).
- 1 2 3 4 Isolated: I reject help from others, preferring to go it alone.
- 1 2 3 4 Refusal to change: This is just who I am, so accept me.
- 1 2 3 4 Rigidity: I can't be flexible or adjust my plans.
- 1 2 3 4 Stubborn: I am obstinate.
- 1 2 3 4 Unsubmissive: I won't receive leadership. "You're not the boss of me."
- 1 2 3 4 Unteachability: I am closed to input or guidance. I have my act together.

Section Score:

Exalting Myself Total: _____
 Belittling Myself Total: _____
 Attacking Others Total: _____
 Ignoring Others Total: _____
TOTAL SCORE: _____

Scoring:

1-33 You are a model of genuine humility.
 34-64 You are learning to be more and more humble. Way to go!
 65-96 Thank you for your honesty. That's the first step to humility!
 97-128 Hmm! You have some work to do. Keep reading!

CURE FOR PRIDE

First, congratulate yourself for being brave enough to take that test. Scanning through it, you probably realized that the questions would be hard, soul-searching, and even a little embarrassing. It's not easy to examine the very ugliest part of yourself, write it down, and then analyze it. Yikes! That's true courage right there. Since pride is wrong thinking about who you are in relation to God, then it makes sense that the cure for any pride you noted on the Pride Test would be to start thinking rightly about who you are in relation to God. Look back at the test and see where you scored the highest—which is not good in this case! Now, take a look at the following solutions to your type of pride.

- **Do you exalt yourself?** You can decide to die to self and stop attempting to steal God's glory. This is a conscious choice; it is a daily decision.
- **Do you belittle yourself?** You can learn who you are in Christ as his precious daughter and stop lying to yourself about your lack of value.
- **Do you attack others?** You can declare that God is God and stop trying to be president of the world. (This was a hard one for me. It took me years to resign!)
- **Do you ignore others?** You can start seeing people as God's instruments and stop resisting their input.

In case you don't know the end of our Disney story, Buzz Lightyear does end up learning humility when he acknowledges his shortcomings and accepts who he really is. After saving the day by "flying" with rockets taped to his back, he deflects a compliment by echoing Woody's earlier jab: "Aw, that wasn't flying. That was falling with style!"

Journal

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he tried three different appeals to Jesus' pride. The first temptation was *to be self-sufficient* and self-reliant by making a stone turn into bread to eat (Luke 4:3). In what areas do you resist depending upon God and the people he has sent into your life? Refer to your answers in the "Ignoring Others" part of the self-test and write down your observations about how you see this type of pride in your life.

The second temptation Jesus resisted was the temptation *to be powerful* by being in charge of the whole world (Luke 4:6). In what areas do you act like you're the "president of the world"? Refer to your answers in the "Attacking Others" part of the self-test and write down your observations about how you see this type of pride in your life.

The third temptation Jesus resisted was the temptation *to be spectacular* by throwing himself off the temple into the hands of angels (Luke 4:9). In what areas do you suffer from the celebrity mentality? Refer to your answers in the "Exalting Myself" and "Belittling Myself" portions of the self-test and write down your observations about how you use either positive or negative attention-seeking methods to bolster your self-esteem.

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

I confess to you that I've been claiming to fly, when all I can really do is "fall with style." I've been taking credit for things that I can only do because of your power and your gifts, and I've been attempting to steal your glory. I'm sorry. At other times I have been belittling myself, criticizing your creation (me), and making myself out to be a loser. I'm harder on myself than you are on me, demanding more of myself than you ever have. I'm sorry. Sometimes, I turn against other people. I take out my insecurities on them, judging them harshly and demanding more of them than you ever have. I'm sorry. And I close myself off to people. I'm rigid and stubborn toward the very ones you have put into my life to help me be more like you. I'm sorry. Help me to stop ignoring the presence of these issues in my life and to call them what they are: pride.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Humility Day 3

How God Redeems Brokenness

It is possible to be too big for God to use you,
but never too small for God to use you.

Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations

YOU'VE GOT MAIL

To: "The Best You" Woman

Sent: Day 3

From: Katie Brazelton

Subject: Humility



It's Day 3, so here is your first Email Message. Feel free to blog me a response at my website, www.LifePurposeCoachingCenters.com/CM, if you'd like. Enjoy the email-coaching and don't forget to open in prayer!

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM CHUCK COLSON ABOUT HUMILITY

One day, as Chuck Colson, imprisoned for his central role in the Watergate coverup, waited on a platform to speak to a group of inmates, he had an epiphany. He realized that God was using his biggest failure—the fact that he was an ex-convict—to achieve his greatest victory, the creation of the Prison Fellowship® ministry. Up to the time of his imprisonment, Colson had much to be proud of—scholarships and honors earned, legal cases argued and won, great decisions made from lofty government offices, and a prestigious position next to the most powerful leader in the world. But his life of success was not what riveted the attention of those inmates that

day—it was his failure and resulting humility. As Colson recounted in his book *Loving God* (Zondervan, 1983), God chose the one experience in which Colson could not glory for *his* glory.

What part of your life do you think is most useful to God? Do you think there is great potential for your musical talent, your organizational skills, or your leadership abilities? Is your greatest contribution in the area of teaching or training, cooking or counseling, design or discipleship, missions or medicine, writing or witnessing? Those areas where you shine are probably quite influential, but think about something here: where is your point of pain? What was your hardest hour of being humbled? When did you experience brokenness? Did you know that your greatest suffering will never go unnoticed by God? He wants to use the pain he has allowed you to feel, and it can become your greatest honor. God is a master at helping us use our negative experiences to minister to others.

HUMILITY: THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

Humility is an essential ingredient in the Christian life. Just like the human body needs oxygen, flowers need water, and bread needs yeast, humility is vital for a growing Christian. The following eight core practices of Christian living are all powerless unless they partner with humility.

1. Worship

It takes humility to truly worship God. A prideful spirit, which in essence is worship of self, cannot coexist with the worship of God. True worship attributes worth to God, and in so doing, it magnifies the contrast between God and us. God is powerful; we are weak. God is holy, which just points out our comparative sinfulness. God is Creator and Savior; we are the created and the saved. Worship is the ultimate act of declaring that God is God and we are not.

2. Self-Esteem

A humble person has healthy self-esteem. Does that seem contradictory? Bette's story in Day 2 showed us that shame, fear, and the insecurity of poor self-esteem were camouflaged in prideful behaviors such as bragging, criticizing, and being a perfectionist. But a humble person is someone who has let go of everything she thought made her great, and in doing so, she discovers the true self God created her to be. God doesn't want our success,

achievements, or perfection. He wants *us*. When we know we're wanted by God—that builds our self-esteem on an unshakable foundation.

3. Honesty

It takes humility to be truly honest. Pride tells lies, exaggerates, hides, pretends, and misrepresents, with the purpose of covering up our shortcomings, failures, and sins. A lie is like a signal flag that identifies the presence of another sin. Whether you lie to yourself, to God, or to another person, a lie is never independent—it is always born of a need to hide another sin related to pride. Humility, on the other hand, acknowledges the truth about what we have done and who we are. It is humbling to truthfully reveal something we have done that we'd rather not make known.

4. Obedience

It takes humility to obey. Obedience requires giving up my way, my rights, my entitlements. We justify our lack of obedience in different ways: “God would want me to be happy” or “I don't want to jeopardize my relationship” or “I'm sacrificing in this other area, so a little compromise is okay” or “I have worked so hard I deserve a break” or “I don't want to hurt another person.” But God is more interested in our holiness than our happiness. He doesn't demand our sacrifices; he wants our obedience. Our job is to obey; his job is to take care of the consequences of our obedience.

5. Teachability

It takes humility to be teachable. In order to be a learner, we need to set aside our expertise or life experiences or age, and be receptive to another's influence. Knowing a lot doesn't automatically qualify us as the authority, the spokesperson, or the teacher. Humble people are lifelong learners who do not disregard the input of others, even in areas where they feel knowledgeable. They count the suggestions of others as valuable information.

6. Servanthood

It takes humility to serve. Servanthood requires us to set aside our prestige, position, and rights in order to serve others. Having great gifts and talents doesn't mean they all have to be in use all the time. The humble path sometimes means setting aside our capabilities and simply serving where there is a need. Humility can narrow our field of service. For example, God may call

us in this season to humbly serve only within our own family—and that may be the toughest assignment for us ever!

7. Waiting

It takes humility to wait. Waiting involves letting God give us our role, instead of self-promoting and assuming we should serve wherever we please. Waiting means allowing God to direct us instead of pushing our agenda. Waiting can also be as simple as closing our mouth until God clearly gives us release to speak.

8. Brokenness

A humble person is a broken person. Have you noticed this? The person who exudes genuine humility is invariably someone who has had an experience that has broken her pride, such as Bette's loss of job, friends, and ministry, or Chuck Colson's imprisonment. Failure or loss has a way of stripping away our false values and selfish obsessions. Then, God steps in and uses the very thing in which we can't glory for his glory. At the point we feel most useless, that's when God can choose to transform us into the highest usefulness.

See www.LifePurposeCoachingCenters.com/CM for a self-test on how well you have woven humility into these ingredients of Christian living.

Journal

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9–10:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul names five types of problems in which he delights, because his weaknesses serve to illuminate God's power. List several examples from your own life in each of the following categories. Additional synonyms from various Bible translations have been provided to help trigger ideas.

Weaknesses, infirmities, limitations

Insults, reproaches, abuse, suffering, mistreatment

Hardships, needs, accidents, constraints, hard times, catastrophes

Persecutions, opposition, perplexities

Difficulties, distresses, bad breaks, calamities, troubles, pressures

Rewrite 2 Corinthians 12:9–10 in your own words, inserting your name, and listing some of the specific weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties you are experiencing.

Example: *But my heavenly dad said to me, "I have plenty of grace for you, Katie, for my power is all the more powerful when you're collapsing." Therefore I can get excited when I feel like I can't go on, because I know that's when Christ's power kicks in. That is why, in the power of Christ, I can rejoice when I get a panic attack, when I am criticized by my friend, when I get bronchitis, when I receive a mean email, when I miss a flight. It's when I'm at my weakest that I give up and let Christ take over, and his power in me makes me strong.*

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

I worship you. With all my heart I mean that. You are God and I am not. Help me let go of the masks I wear to bolster my self-esteem. Help me to stop covering my sins with various types of lies. Strip away all my excuses for not obeying you. I want to have the beauty of a lifelong learner. Show me where I should serve, and I'll do what you say. Tell me when I should speak, and until you do, I'll wait. Take all my broken places and transform them into humility so that I can be most useful to you.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Your Humility Coach

May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing, this is victory.

Kate Wilkinson, 1859–1928,
writer of “May the Mind of Christ, My Savior”

PERSPECTIVE-CHANGING OUTING

In my town there is a manmade lake with a lovely walking path encircling it. There are park benches, weeping willows, paddleboats, a sloping beach, and gentle inlets. When I come here with a friend for a chat, we usually first stop in at the coffee shop for a latte to sip while we walk. Then along our route, we sometimes pause to feed the ducks, or just sit on a grassy knoll and gaze at the glimmering water gently lapping at our feet. It’s a peaceful setting for a heart-to-heart conversation such as the one you and I are about to have. So let’s get our favorite beverages, take a stroll around the lake as we pray silently, and then talk together about how you’re doing in the area of humility.

As we get started, let me ask you this: Do you know who Jesus named as the greatest person ever born? Well, it wasn’t Moses of the Red Sea and Ten Commandments fame; it wasn’t David, who was a “man after God’s own heart”; it wasn’t Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel; or Joseph, who braved grave injustices to rescue the Israelites from the grip of a famine. Rather, it was the scruffy, wild-eyed hermit, John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11). Now, why am I asking you about the greatest person ever born just before we talk about humility? Because humility was one of the primary characteristics that caused John the Baptist to be Jesus’ top pick. And John had a formula for humility that we’re going to use as our measure for today’s discussion: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 KJV).

HE MUST INCREASE

“He must increase” doesn’t refer to an increase of Jesus’ divine abilities ... or authority ... or glory, but to our vision of his greatness....

The closer we come to him, the bigger he seems to get.

Charles Swindoll, pastor, author

The problem with working on humility is that it’s impossible to achieve by working on it directly. The more you focus on humility, the more you are focusing on yourself, which is an entrée to pride. And the minute you say, “I have achieved humility,” oops—that’s prideful too! So, how on earth are you supposed to work on a quality that eludes you if you work on it? Well, the prescription for humility starts not with working on humility, but working on increasing your vision of God. As you grow closer to him, spend more time concentrating on him, set your sights firmly on him, invest yourself in learning about him and talking with him, he will take up more and more of your field of vision. True, this does require practice, devotion, dedication, and concentration on your part. Becoming unself-conscious is really a matter of becoming other-conscious, isn’t it?

How God-conscious are you? For each of the following passages, assess how you are doing at seeking God in the way described. Then write down ideas from each verse for making God a bigger and bigger part of your life.

And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT

Part 1: The Making of a Right Relationship to God

But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29

“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.”

Matthew 5:6 MSG

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.

Psalm 42:1

I MUST DECREASE

It is well to remember that the entire population of the universe, with one trifling exception, is composed of others.

John Andrew Holmes, 1823–1872, physician and author

There is a natural phenomenon that occurs when God takes up more of your field of vision: your focus on yourself automatically gets smaller. But, if you try to decrease yourself in a vacuum, with no corresponding increase of God, it is just as ineffective as straining to become humble. Here’s how Chuck Swindoll explains it:

Ironically, those who strain to become humble, who try to engineer their own decrease, only call attention to themselves. Socrates once pithily mocked a man for dressing with ostentatious poverty: “I can see your vanity, Antisthenes, through the holes in your cloak.”

On the other hand, people who aspire to exalt Christ divert attention from themselves. Commentator Arthur W. Pink said, “The more I am occupied with Christ, the less shall I be occupied with myself. . . .”

The question then is not “How can I humble myself?” but “How can I occupy myself with Christ?” (*John the Baptizer*, Insight for Living, 1991)

Using Philippians 2:3–8 (NCV) as a measuring stick, indicate with a check mark how you are doing in the following ways of decreasing yourself.

Verse 3: *When you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves.*

Imagine a simple scale for measuring your actions in the past week. If you were to put all your actions designed to gain honor for yourself on one side, and all your actions giving honor to others on the other side, which side would be heavier?

Honor for myself

Honor for others

In what ways can you give more honor to others?

Verse 4: *Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others.*

Imagine another scale; this one is for this past week’s conversations. If you were to put all your stories about yourself on one side, and all your questions of others and listening to their stories about themselves on the other side, which side would be heavier?

My stories

Stories of others

What can you do to shift the balance and draw out more from others about themselves?

Verse 6: *Christ himself was like God in everything. But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit.*

The next scale weighs how you used your capabilities. On one side, put all the times you used your skills, abilities, or talents to benefit yourself in some way this week. On the other side put all the times you used your skills, abilities, or talents to benefit others. Which side is heavier?

Benefit for myself

Benefit for others

How can you use your skills, abilities, or talents to bless others more often?

Verse 7: *But he gave up his place with God and made himself nothing. He was born as a man and became like a servant.*

This scale measures this week's rights. Think of the times you insisted on your rights, demanded your way, or made use of your status or position. Those times go on one side. Next, think about the times you gave up your rights, let someone else have his/her way, or served others. Place those times on the other side. Which side is heavier?

My rights

Serving others

In what situations can you let go of your rights and serve instead?

Verse 8: *He humbled himself and was fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross.*

The last scale measures this past week’s obedience when it hurt. If, on one side, you were to put all the times you excused yourself from obeying because it would hurt, and on the other side you were to put all the times you obeyed God, even when it hurt, which side would be heavier?

Excusing when it hurt

Obeying when it hurt

In what situation do you need to let go of your fears and obey?

My final question for you today is this: What encouraging thing did you notice about yourself in this exercise?

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

Examine me, Lord. If you were to set up a scale of humility, and place my prideful acts on one side and my evidence of humility on the other, how would I measure up? If you were to give me an eye exam and assess how much of my field of vision is filled with you and how much is focused on myself, how would I measure up? Look deep into my heart and my mind and reveal to me the truth about which one of us truly has precedence in my life—you or me. Lord, may you increase. I want to know you more today than yesterday, and less than tomorrow. I want to become more enamored with you. I want to engage with you more and more frequently throughout my day. Show me how to decrease. As you fill more of me, help me to let go of more of myself. Help me honor, listen to, benefit, and serve others. And help me obey you, even when it hurts.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Steps to Humility

Being totally committed to Christ's increase ... means letting our lives act as a frame that shows up the masterpiece—Jesus Christ. And a worthy frame isn't tarnished or dull, plain or cheap; yet neither is it so elaborate that it overpowers its picture. Instead, with subtle loveliness, it draws the observer's eyes to the beautiful work of art it displays.

Charles Swindoll, pastor, author

SITTING QUIETLY WITH YOUR MAKER

Today is a time of reflection and solitude for you in the privacy of your own quiet-time space. You will be putting all your decisions into a Humility Action Plan, with steps to follow and practices to adopt that will deepen this character quality in your life. You will take a look at developing humility from three perspectives: developing a right view of God, developing a right view of yourself, and developing a right view of others.

Ask yourself how deeply you are able to focus on increasing your humility during this season of your life. Then select the appropriate action steps on pages 53–55, whatever you feel you can realistically experiment with this week. It's your plan, your life, and your prayerful decision—nobody else's. If you feel God impressing on you to concentrate on your humility right now, go for these exercises with gusto—without further ado or delay! I am confident that whatever effort you are able to devote to improving your humility will be richly rewarded by him on earth and in heaven.

Humility Action Plan

PRAYER FOCUS: Worship God by praying about some of his characteristics (faithfulness, kindness) or his names (Protector, Provider, King, Holy One). Ask him to show you where you have overvalued yourself and where you have undervalued yourself. Get your eyes off yourself by praising him for a person in your life and pray for an opportunity to share that praise with someone today.

DEVOTIONAL FOCUS: Choose one of the following Scripture passages on the topic of humility: To focus on *developing more of a right view of God*, read Revelation 5:8-14 and marvel at who he is. To focus on *developing more of a right view of yourself*, read the story of Naaman's healing in 2 Kings 5:1-19 and meditate on areas of your life in which pride has made you overvalue yourself to the degree that you struggle with obeying God. To focus on *developing more of a right view of others*, read the passage about the log in your eye and the speck in someone else's eye from Matthew 7:1-5, possibly using a few different translations for a fresh perspective.

EXTRA PERSPECTIVE: Read books to help you better understand God's nature, such as *Knowing God*, the classic on this topic by J. I. Packer. Or get creative and take the focus off yourself by giving extra attention to a friend who could use it right now.

Action Steps: Developing a Right View of God

Instructions: Prayerfully choose one or two action steps to experiment with this week.

Start Date

- _____ **I will worship God.** I will turn more events of my day into a prayer so that he will increase and I will decrease. I will include God in my thoughts while I'm driving, walking, working, chatting with someone, or watching television. I will acknowledge his great power by talking to him about my worry, fear, anger, frustration, and anxiety, as well as my delight and cheer!
- _____ **I will study God.** I will dive deep into exploring who God is. I will do this through studying his names, his character traits, and his love toward me in Scripture. (For a list of verses in these categories, go to www.LifePurposeCoachingCenters.com/CM.)

_____ **I will hunt for God.** I will go on a daily God Hunt, journaling where I see him show up in my day: the things I see in nature, the interruptions, the serendipities, the detours, the provisions, the difficulties, the connections with people, and/or the answers to prayer. I will share with at least one person something I saw on my daily God Hunt.

_____ **I will develop** a right view of God by *(add your idea here)*

Action Steps: Developing a Right View of Myself

Instructions: Prayerfully choose one or two action steps to experiment with this week.

Start Date

_____ **I will stop trying so hard to be perfect.** I will intentionally let some non-life-threatening thing go, and when someone notices, I will laugh about it instead of apologizing or fixing it.

_____ **I will not tear myself down.** I will see my attitude of worthlessness for what it is—pride. I will replace my negative self-talk with thanks to God for how he has made me.

_____ **I will not boast.** I will not maneuver conversations to create opportunities to brag. I will not exaggerate when I am telling a story. I will not show off.

_____ **I will try to learn** one new thing every day, even in my area of expertise. I will be open to correction, teaching, and the opinions of others.

_____ **I will check my motives.** I will carry a card in my wallet that says, “Check Your Motives,” to remind myself to check for any prideful motives before I speak or act. I will regularly ask myself about my reasons for volunteering, name-dropping, emailing/calling, dropping hints, etc.

_____ **I will obey God in an area in which I have been holding back.** Instead of saying “That’s just the way I am,” I will work on areas—with the power of the Holy Spirit—in which I am offensive, irritating, hurtful, selfish, or out of control.

_____ **I will develop** a right view of myself by *(add your idea here)*

Action Steps: Developing a Right View of Others

Instructions: Prayerfully choose one or two action steps to experiment with this week.

Start Date

_____ **I will be an encourager.** I will stop comparing myself to others, and instead turn my attention to others and freely give genuine compliments. I will not be judgmental. I will replace my tendency to be harsh, opinionated, and critical, with words and acts of kindness, affirmation, and understanding.

_____ **I will be a helper.** I will get my eyes off myself, especially if I am going through a difficult time. I will look for ways to turn my attention outward and be a help to someone else. I will shift the balance from being more of a taker to being more of a giver.

_____ **I will be a servant.** I will deliberately choose to serve somewhere I will not be noticed. I will not compete or be concerned about who gets credit.

_____ **I will be a receiver.** I will accept help, gifts, or compliments from others graciously, allowing others the dignity of exercising their gifts of helps, generosity, or encouragement.

_____ **I will be a mentor.** Rather than doing everything myself, I will develop others and help them discover their areas of giftedness, being their cheerleader when they succeed.

_____ **I will develop** a right view of others by *(add your idea here)*

MASTER ACTION PLAN

Now, select only one major action step from this Day 5 exercise and record it on your Master Action Plan in appendix A on page 322. When you have finished reading this book, continue to refer to that one major action step on your Master Action Plan (as well as this Humility Action Plan, of course, as your season of life permits!). Remember, in order to become more like Christ in your character, you need to collaborate with God in three ways: preparation, prayer, and practice. You have done the work of preparation by learning God's truth about humility. Now, internalize it by praying for the Holy Spirit's help and practicing your action steps, one by one.

HUMILITY PRAYER

Precious Lord,

I wish I did not struggle in this area, because it makes me so sad to think about the terrible ripple effects my pride has on others. Worse, though, I am deeply sorry for my pride which attempts to make me the president of the universe and steal glory from you. Today, I just want to go on record as saying: I love you. I am sorry for my prideful ways. Thank you for loving me in spite of myself, and most of all, thank you for your extreme kindness and willingness to take me from where I am today. That is truly remarkable to me. It may very well be the first thing I thank you for when I get to see you in heaven.

In the name of Jesus, amen.